

# The 10K-A-Day Weight Control Workout

*If you're attempting to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, walking is an ideal activity. In addition to walking more throughout the day, you'll also burn extra calories if you build the 10K-A-Day weight control workout into your day.*

Some physiologists still give their clients an "exercise prescription" for weight control – a rigid set of guidelines including time, frequency, distance, heart rate, and warm-up/cool-down activities. While these recommendations aren't necessarily wrong, they're often too confining, time-consuming, or demotivating for the average person – resulting in too many exercise dropouts.

The 10K-A-Day weight control workout is different. We give you suggestions and tips that have worked for others, but your plan is up to you. There's no right way to exercise except the one that works for you. And the only wrong way is one that doesn't work for you or puts you at risk for injury.

## Warm-up

Walking is such a natural activity that it doesn't require extensive preparation. The simplest, most effective way to warm up is to begin walking at about 3/4 speed. Increase your speed after 2-4 minutes, or when you begin to feel loose. You may need a little more warm-up time depending on the intensity of your last workout, the time of day, or if you've been sitting for long periods. Err on the side of caution – take a longer warm-up if you don't feel you're ready to go full speed.



## Light stretching

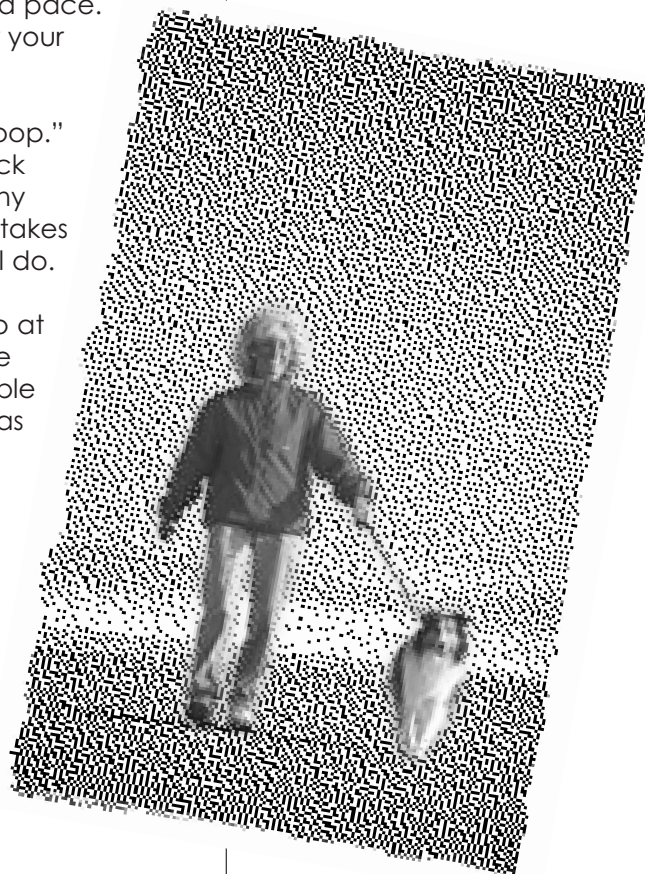
Some studies show light stretching of leg muscles used in walking improves performance and reduces the risk of injury, while others say it has no effect. And if done while the muscles are "cold" (before 2-4 minutes walking at 3/4 speed), stretching may actually increase injury risk. Try some light stretches after your 2-4 minute walking warm-up to see if it makes a difference for you.

## Hitting your stride

Your goal is to walk as long and as fast as you comfortably can – every day. When starting out, you may be unsure of the right distance and pace. Try this routine for your first 2-3 walks:

- Find a defined "loop." A high school track works best, but any short course that takes you in a circle will do.
- Warm up for 1 lap at a moderate pace (you should be able to whistle or sing as you normally would).

- Time yourself as you begin walking at what feels like a good workout pace (as fast as you comfortably can). You should be able to carry on a conversation without gasping for breath, but singing or whistling is more difficult.
- Walk as long as you can at that pace and count the laps.
- Check the time when you finish and determine how far you've gone – 4 laps around most high school tracks equal about 1 mile (there are approximately 2000 steps per mile depending on stride length).



# The 10K-A-Day Weight Control Workout *(Continued)*

After 3 walks you'll be confident in your ability to judge pace and distance and can set out on new courses. Use a car or bike odometer to measure distances in the area you plan to walk. If you find you're tiring less than 15 minutes into your walk, slow down and try to walk longer. The longer you walk at your workout pace, the more fat calories you'll burn and the sooner you'll see results. As President Truman once said, "Walk like you're going somewhere."

Don't be afraid to stretch your route if it feels good. Or if you tire earlier than the day before, it's okay to walk less. But try not to skip days. Even if you only get out for 5 minutes, you're reinforcing the walking habit — 90% of the battle.

## Cool-down

Allow your heart rate, breathing, blood flow, and perspiration to return to preworkout levels after your walk by continuing to walk at about 1/2 your workout speed for 5 minutes or longer.

## Mixing it up

Changing pace, direction, scenery, and distance a couple days a week keeps your walking routine fresh and interesting. Although your goal is to walk as far and as fast as you can comfortably walk each day, don't feel you're locked into a specific time or distance. Allow yourself "easy" days, when you feel like backing off a little, but try not to skip your walk entirely.

## Walking technique

The less you think about your style, the better. As your pace quickens, you'll naturally raise your hands and roll your hips to accommodate a faster gait. Focus on staying relaxed, comfortable, and in control. If your shoulders are tight, arms are flailing, or back tires quickly, you're probably walking too fast.

## Reducing your risk of injury

Walking is one of the least risky fitness pursuits. But as with any new physical activity, there are some precautions to limit risk even further. Discuss your plans with your doctor if you:

- Have not been exercising and are a man 45 or older or woman 55 or older

- Are pregnant or planning to become pregnant
- Have physical limitations that could impair your ability to walk
- Have been diagnosed with a chronic condition such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, back problems, etc. that could be made worse by walking.

Not starting an exercise program is a lot more risky than starting, but don't take any unnecessary chances — check with your doctor if you're unsure.

